

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, One East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on May 23, 2013.

Members Present:

Nancy Aposhian
Robert Cluff
Joe Cooper
Merlin Ellis
Lars Nielson, Jr.

Dr. Robbi D. Venditti
Karina Wilhelm
Peggy Wilson

Members Absent:

Alyssa Yingling

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein Sunnee O'Rork
Tom Wilson Shawn Lawson
Jean Kaminski

Lars Nielson, Jr., Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Lars Nielson, Jr., Chair, ask if there were any additions/corrections to the minutes from the March 28 meeting. There being none, Peggy Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes from March 28, Joe Cooper seconded, and the Board members present unanimously agreed. The minutes will be posted on the city's webpage.

Public Comments: No members of the public were present.

Introduction of New Board Member Robert Cluff – Lars Nielson, Jr.

Lars Nielson, Jr., Chair introduced and welcomed new Board member Robert Cluff. Mr. Cluff was born in Arizona, moved to Utah for a few years, and decided he liked it better in the Valley and returned to Mesa. His wife is an Arizona native as well, and he has five children who are involved in the performing arts in one form or another.

Information – Presentation on the MAC's Volunteer & Special Events Program – Shawn Lawson

Shawn Lawson is Mesa Arts Center's (MAC) Volunteer and Special Events Coordinator. At this time, there are approximately 300 active and 50-75 inactive volunteers. There are numerous volunteer opportunities, ushering being the number one choice. Volunteering does have guidelines, protocol, and extensive training before becoming active; they are the ambassadors in the theaters – the first faces people see. MAC continually receives compliments on our ushers – and when we do receive a complaint, the issue is taken seriously and addressed immediately. There are volunteers who assist with festivals and special events; work as teacher aids, docents and greeters in the Museum; and work in The Store. We accept volunteers from age 16 and older; consideration for someone under 16 is handled on a case-by-case basis.

Conducting tours is another volunteer role. There are free tours on Wednesdays that require a reservation the week prior to the tour, and private tours for groups are available at a modest \$5 fee. Tour guides are trained in the history of Mesa Arts Center; architecture, landscaping, etc.

Ms. Lawson organizes the MAC festivals and events outside the theaters. There are four major festivals each year

- Season Kick-Off Event – in September. This festival opens the season each year.
- Dia de Los Muertos Festival – a two day cultural festival at the end of October. The feature attraction of the festival is the altars.
- Mesa Arts Festival – a two-day, juried festival at which artists sell their work. This festival includes two stages with live entertainment and is as much a music festival as it is an art festival.
- spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity – this festival occurs during the March school spring break week. This last year was the third year for an event at this time, although the name spark! was new this year; the first two years were 10 days, but was changed to a five-day festival this year and worked much better. This festival offers experience of emersion in creative activities.

Target 3 for Free occurs the first Sunday of every month. The Museums are open free of charge – although Mesa Contemporary Arts is always free to the public, but on the free Sunday, MCA offers children's arts and craft activities, as well as live entertainment. The outside live entertainment at MCA does not occur May through October, but arts and craft activities continue during that time.

Out-to-Lunch free concert series occurs in the fall and the spring of each year. The concerts are in the outdoor, Wells Fargo Garden every Thursday from 12:30 – 1:30 for anywhere from six to ten weeks. The fall series kicks off in October/November and the spring series begins in February. Fall concerts average around 400 attendees and this spring, attendance for the full series exceeded 6,500; one concert had 1,100 attendees (that was during spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity).

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Sunnee O’Rork

- The Museum used a small portion of their grant money to create business cards for a few staff members that have front like the post card sent out that flashes from Arizona Museum for Youth to i.d.e.a. Museum. It has already had a positive impact for those using them at conferences and networking events.
- Sunday, May 26, is the final day for the “Weather or Not” exhibition that has been very popular. The school tours have loved this exhibit, and this is the first time school tour revenue exceeded general admission revenue.
- The Museum will close the “west wing,” as opposed to the original plan to close the entire Museum, for renovation and to install the new exhibit, “Dream On.” The public reception will be on June 20 from 5 – 7 p.m. Following, the Friends Board will sponsor an end of year fundraiser with a \$75 private reception for Laura VanDuren, artist-in-residence from CA who will give a 30-minute talk about her experience as an artist. She is the artist who is creating the cloud sculpture for the Museum. Proceeds from the event benefit the Museum’s education programs.
- ArtVille will remain open during the renovation, and Family Zone will set up in the multipurpose room. With the reception on June 20, “Dream On” will open accompanied by a “refreshed” ArtZone area.
- Because of the renovation, members received an extra month of membership and admission will be half-price.
- The Museum’s traveling exhibit program is going well. The Museum received their first check from Adelante Healthcare for sculptures the Museum will be making for them. A Brochure was created that will go out to various museums via e-mail. The traveling exhibition will be “Art Speaks: A Way with Words.” The exhibition deals with visual communication, literacy, and how people communicate, and will premiere at AMY in the fall.
- When visiting the Museum, a grandmother from San Francisco left a message on a white board. It read, “This is a wonderful place for kids of all ages.”

Lars Neilson, Jr., Chair, asked when the Museum creates the sculptures for Adelante Healthcare, is the work done by Museum staff or is it contracted out. Ms. O’Rork stated that the contract between the Museum and Adelante Healthcare to create the sculptures requires a certain specialty. The Museum engages a contractor to assist staff and oversees the project. They do also have volunteers who often help with exhibitions, and if anyone knows of someone who has skills in any of these areas, please encourage them to talk with Museum staff.

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Tom Wilson

- Mesa Grande has closed for the summer months. During this time, staff continues to work on the punch list, will hire an Associate Education Coordinator, and develop the education program to prepare for opening the first week of October.
- The bond issue to renovate the Federal Building passed; this is a joint project with the Mesa Historical Museum. The Historical Museum will occupy the ground floor for exhibitions and Arizona museum of Natural History will use the basement for collections storage with some mezzanine space. The collections and exhibition materials currently in the Federal Building are being moved to Lehi for storage. This is a two-year project expected to open in 2015 in conjunction with Light Rail. The process is allowing Arizona Museum of Natural History to deed their historical collections to the Mesa Historical Museum, which once held this collection. This will give both Museums a better focus.
- The Museum’s new exhibition “What is It?” is popular. Kids and parents enjoy identifying things from the past like a telephone booth, record player, etc. using inter-actives in guessing what it is.
- Staff is working on the “Art of the Ancient Americas” exhibition. This exhibition is based on recent donations to the Museum from the Americas.
- The Museum is experiencing a good year with an anticipated 155,000 visitors and \$649,000 in revenue by the end of the fiscal year.

Lars Nielson, Jr., Chair asked if the Museum holds the archive for historical photographs of Mesa. Tom Wilson replied that both the Arizona Museum of Natural History and Mesa Historical Museum have historical pictures. The goal is to have Mesa’s historical collections under one roof and one legal authority. The Federal Building will allow that to happen. Mr. Neilson also asked if they could digitize them and make them available. Dr. Wilson said that some are available on the Museum’s website, and they would love to do all of them, but there are no funds to do that at this time.

Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Cindy Ornstein for Rob Schultz

As Rob is serving on a panel for the Arts Education Grants for the City of Phoenix, Cindy Ornstein reported on his behalf.

- The Arts Education Program has finalized a written Agreement with Benedictine University; for-credit classes will be offered in painting, drawing, and printmaking in fall 2013. The University is renting Arts Studio spaces for their classes, providing additional earned income for Mesa Arts Center (MAC). The Agreement is a culmination of months of building a relationship with Benedictine through meetings, tours, and negotiations. MAC is also negotiating with

Wilkes University who will offer literary workshops in the Dobson Lecture Hall starting in the winter of 2014. Ms. Ornstein was invited to be on Wilkes' Mesa Advisory Board.

- Artspace, a non-profit development company that develops live work space for artists, is working with us on the next phase of the process this summer during which we will be working with them on preparation of a comprehensive market study of Mesa and other Valley cities. The Market Study will look at the space needs, preferences on locations, specific disciplines artists might need, what they can pay (willing to pay, expect to pay), and survey creative businesses as well. The Study is planned to kick off in September with a launch the week of September 23. Artspace was enthusiastic about the strong interest in this project from the community, the Mayor, and City Council.

We have also received positive response from funders. Not only is the Market Study paid for, but we also received a commitment for funding of the first of three phases of pre-development. If the Market Study confirms that the need is there and that there is a clear market for development, we have the money for the first phase, which will give us an advantage in raising funds for the other two phases of pre-development. Once that is in place, Artspace handles the actual development and building management.

- Rob Schultz is serving on the Celebration of Freedom committee – the three Arts and Culture facilities will be participating and take responsibility for the arts and culture activity area. This year the celebration will be one day only – Saturday, June 29. MAC campus will not be used this year due to Light Rail construction. The celebration will be north of Main Street to 1st Street and from Center Street to Sirrine Street. Fireworks will be shot from the Convention Center. The festival activities include live entertainment, tailgate area, Military Showcase, Fallen Soldier Memorial, kid's splash zone, beer garden, College Town, and a VIP area.

Director's Report – Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein was invited to join Jaime Dempsey, Deputy Director of Arizona Commission on the Arts, to appear on AZ PBS talking about the release of a report from the Cultural Data Project regarding the value of arts in the community and its economic impact. Ms. Ornstein served on the committee that produced the piece and will represent the arts and culture community.

Ms. Ornstein announced that Mesa Arts Center received the ArtPlace grant for \$300,000 in support of the "21st Century Café Society" Project. Some adjustments were made in response to panel questions/concerns, as we did not receive the full amount of \$575,000 that we asked for originally. Adjustments include - 1) In Phase I, rather than two or three multi-media boxes, we will do one larger box that will have five screens, 2) add a Photo booth, not an actual photo booth, but a vertical kiosk with a camera in it that will enable the community to engage around photography. MAC is used, on a daily basis, as one of the hot spots in Mesa for family photos (graduation, family portraits, weddings, etc.). In response, the camera can be activated, then respond to motion sensors, and people can create their own mini-exhibition of themselves, family, and friends that will immediately upload to one of the screens on the media box.

Construction for The Alliance Pavilion Stage was approved by City Council on May 22, and will begin this summer.

One other new element added is the design phase of the shade sculpture on the north patio. The idea is to augment the shade sails with sculptural elements in layers over the vertical space above so it will have beautiful and interesting shadow patterns below.

The panel was concerned about site specificity, which is why the photography was added. They also asked that we address Arizona's climate, which is the reason for the shade structure. Another indication of site specificity is that profiles of citizens and visitors will be featured in a loop on one of the five screens. This reflects the imagery on the sculpture that will be at the Light Rail Station on Center Street. The sculpture is made of cut out metal, with profiles of actual people attending festivals at MAC or some taken from historical photos. Phase II will include Plaza renovations, and building and installation of the shade sculpture.

MAC participation is experiencing another big jump over the prior fiscal year. Last year's total was 387,000; this year, through April, participation is just under 417,000. If we match last year's May and June numbers, we will hit around 460,000, which would be a 19% increase. If we realize that number, we will realize a 67% increase over the past three fiscal years.

MAC received a second year grant from National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for the Jazz A – Z Program. MAC also received \$25,000 from Flinn Foundation for our success in achieving our goals in their Participation Enhancement Grant Award of \$50,000 last year that was used to create the four videos with PBS. If a grant applicant is successful in their proposal, they are eligible to receive the additional \$25,000, based on Foundation Board approval.

The new Performing Live Season was announced and initial sales were opened to members; sales are going well. To-date, approximately \$333,000 tickets have been sold.

Merlin Ellis asked if we are advertising more than in the past. Ms. Ornstein responded, yes, we did advertise more than two – three years ago, but less than we did five years ago. A number of things have had an impact – a redesign of MAC's website a few years ago, the e-newsletters which now has 110,000 subscribers, social media, and word of mouth. We have established a reputation over eight years with people who are sharing their experiences at MAC with others.

Report on Conferences and/or meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information only

Nancy Aposhian did have tickets to Audra McDonald in March, which was postponed until December.

Dr. Robbi Venditti attended the Latino 2nd Annual FALA Festival of the Arts in April. She thoroughly enjoyed how they had a progression along the Shadow Walk beginning with traditional acoustic guitar, old-fashioned dress and dance, arts and crafts, and ending with a rock band.

Robert Cluff reported that his son participated in the Jazz A – Z Program this past year – he is a jazz drummer for Red Mountain High School. As a father, and a jazz drummer himself, he was mesmerized by the experience of seeing his son playing alongside a world-renowned jazz drummer in concert. It was a wonderful experience for his family and a great start to his son's jazz drumming career. When he was a student, these types of experiences did not exist. He is thrilled that his son has this opportunity.

The next scheduled meeting date is July 25, 2013, 4 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department